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SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA OFFICIAL: "NATO INVOLVEMENT IN THE BLACK SEA IS OUR END GAME"

REF: ANKARA 802

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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11. (C) Turkey shares with us the goal of eventual NATO involvement in the Black Sea, an MFA official told us April 17. At BLACKSEAFOR's March 31 senior officials meeting, the members agreed on a common threat assessment and agreed that it would be beneficial to build some ties with outside states and organizations. Indeed, the U.S. and other interested states are welcome to observe BLACKSEAFOR's "activation" in Constanta, Romania this August. Ukraine declared itself ready to join Turkey's maritime interdiction operation in the Black Sea; a number of other littorals--including Russia--are giving it a serious look. Turkey's deliberate approach seems to be bearing fruit. End summary.

12. (C) PolMilCouns and PolMilOff called on MFA Deputy Director General for Security Affairs Fatih Ceylan and NATO Department Head Atilla Gunay on April 7 to get a readout on the March 31 BLACKSEAFOR meeting of MFA senior officials. Before Gunay could provide his readout (Ceylan could not attend due to illness), Ceylan (unprompted) said that Turkey's long-term goal is for NATO to be involved in the Black Sea. "That's our end game," he declared. Ceylan insisted there is "no plot" for Turkey and Russia to turn the Sea into their own personal lake. He said Turkey was moving slowly in this regard, but also that the Turks have told the Russians that eventually BLACKSEAFOR or something like it would have a "NATO affiliation." Ceylan reported that Russia did not object to this.

13. (C) Gunay explained that the main goal of the Kiev meeting was to reach agreement on a senior experts report evaluating threats in the Black Sea maritime domain, chiefly terrorism and WMD proliferation. The nations agreed that the wider Black Sea region may have many threats--WMD proliferation, terrorism, trafficking in persons and SA/LW, etc.--which have the potential to "spill over" into the maritime domain. However, Ceylan injected, based on Turkey's BLACK SEA HARMONY operation (see reftel) and input from the other littorals, Turkey cannot now make an assessment that there is an "imminent and direct" threat in the maritime domain. Ceylan also pointed out that Turkey had worked assiduously to have the threat assessment include the same issues that are of concern to the Alliance and to the EU. In essence, Ceylan said, the BLACKSEAFOR nations agreed to measure their threat assessment by Euro-Atlantic standards. Ceylan allowed us to briefly review the threat assessment, but said he would need permission from his superiors to hand us a copy; he subsequently provided us a copy on April 8 (see para. nine), asking that we hold it closely.

14. (C) The officials in Kiev focused on two issues: How to operationalize dealing with threats in the Black Sea, and whether the member nations had the legal framework in place to do so. On the first issue, the nations agreed on the need to improve communications. Additionally, the nations agreed to create some sort of command center, at first during activations of BLACKSEAFOR. The officials assigned their respective naval commands to look into these issues. On the legal issue, the officials agreed that in general the BLACKSEAFOR founding agreement and relevant UNSCRs (especially 1540) provide an adequate legal framework.

15. (C) Gunay reported that the member states also agreed on delicate language for how BLACKSEAFOR will relate in the future to the "outside world." First, the officials agreed that the U.S. and other interested countries were welcome to observe BLACKSEAFOR's "activation" scheduled to begin August 8 in Constanta, Romania. Second, they agreed on language stating that it would be beneficial for the littorals to (collectively) look into "ways and means to interact with other states and organizations" in the future.

16. (C) Gunay reported on Turkey's efforts to multilateralize its BLACK SEA HARMONY maritime interdiction operation (MIO) on the Black Sea. Ukraine has volunteered to join and has only to sort out technical issues with the Turkish Navy. The Russian official at the meeting said Russia is also quite

interested in joining but needs higher-level political approval. Georgia is interested, although it essentially has no navy. The Bulgarians said they had yet to complete their interagency policy process on this issue. Romania was apparently silent. Gunay noted that the Romanians did not speak up as much as they normally do at the Kiev meeting, but added that the Romanian official was fairly new. (COMMENT: We defer to Embassy Bucharest, but wonder if Romania's silence was based on what we understand is its reluctance to carry out MIO in the Black Sea under the BLACKSEAFOR rubric. END COMMENT.) Ceylan reported that--as fellow NATO Allies--Turkey had offered Bulgaria and Romania "first dibs" at joining BLACK SEA HARMONY as early as January of this year, but that neither had responded by the time of the Kiev meeting, where Turkey threw it open to others.

17. (SBU) Gunay noted that the next BLACKSEAFOR political consultations will likely take place before June of this year and again in the fall, followed by another senior officials meeting NLT December 2005.

18. (C) Comment: While Turkey continues to take a "go slow" approach with us vis-a-vis NATO or U.S. involvement in Black Sea maritime security, we are impressed by Ceylan's comment that NATO involvement is in Turkey's end game. The willingness to accept foreign observers for the August BLACKSEAFOR activation is encouraging. If the Turks' readout of the BLACKSEAFOR meeting is accurate, their deliberate approach seems to be working. We recommend that we continue to support Turkish leadership in this area, while also reminding all the littorals that we are always interested in learning more and standing by to assist at any time we are asked. End comment.

19. (C/NF) Text of BLACKSEAFOR document "Maritime Risk Assessment in the Black Sea"

BEGIN TEXT (Note internal paragraph numbering)

Maritime Risk Assessment in the Black Sea

#### 1. Definition of Maritime Risks:

Maritime risks encompass all actions with the potential to disrupt law and order as well as to inflict certain damages on persons, property and environment in the maritime areas, caused by deliberate actions or negligence. Maritime risks in the Black Sea are endogenous and exogenous in nature. The following are the main risks which can be encountered in the maritime areas.

##### a. Asymmetric Risks:

Asymmetric risks are those terrorism-related maritime risks of non-military nature. These asymmetric risks may also stem from spillover effects of risks such as aggressive nationalism, separatism, religious intolerance, xenophobia, temporary inability of some littoral states to enforce law and order, trafficking in human beings and drugs, illicit transfers in small arms and light weapons and possible proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery and related materials. Vessels can be used in illegal activities, including terrorism at sea, and thus become tools of asymmetric risks. Merchant shipping may also be misused to transport asymmetric means (material and manpower) in between certain geographic locations.

Furthermore, financial gains by merchant ships through commercial activities might also be used in support of asymmetric acts. Asymmetric risks in the maritime areas also entail activities using surprise as an element, as well as unexpected venues and means.

Asymmetric risks jeopardize the safety and security of navigation, as well as of the maritime areas.

##### b. Organized Crime:

Illegal activities may be carried out in the maritime areas, due to the difficulty in controlling vast sea areas. When sea-lines of communications, as well as critical choke points are controlled and partolled, these illegal activities might be redirected into areas where no shipping lines cross or no systematic surveillance takes place. Organized crime might entail, but not be limited to the following illegal actions:

- (1) Drug Trafficking
- (2) Illicit Transfers in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)
- (3) Illegal Migration
- (4) Trafficking in Human Beings
- (5) Illicit Trafficking in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), delivery systems and related materials.

##### c. Environmental Risks:

Any environmental incident polluting the maritime areas poses a major risk to public health, economy and natural habitat,

thus generating, in some cases, far-reaching consequences. These risks might be generated either by deliberate action (e.g. dumping waste), or human error (e.g. collision at sea).

## **12. Assessment of Risks:**

### **a. Asymmetric Risks:**

The Black Sea has become a major route for oil, as well as passenger and containerized cargo transportation. As in other regions of the world where there is an increase in the volume of maritime transportation, there are chances that cargo traffic may be misused to disrupt security.

In the Black Sea, one specific incident took place in 1996, in which a Panama flagged ferryboat was hijacked from Turkish port of Trabzon. One cannot rule out such an incident happening again in the future.

### **b. Organized Crime:**

Trafficking in human beings exists in the territories of the Black Sea region. However, there are no indications that it is systematically done through maritime transportation.

Illegal migration stemming from the region, as well as from parts of Europe, Asia, the Middle East is mainly using terrestrial routes, but it has already started to cross the Black Sea region.

There is no firm evidence that systematic drug trafficking exists in the Black Sea. Narcotics destined to Europe from Afghanistan via Central Asia are currently transported through land. Although smugglers always use the most secure paths and alter them frequently as possible, the Black Sea may be used as a transit route in some isolated smuggling cases. However, it remains a possibility that sea lines of communications may be used more often in the future, if not controlled properly.

Illicit transfers in SALW are increasing all over the world. There are indications that the Black Sea is currently used to a certain degree for such activities.

On the other hand, there have been no reported cases of illicit trafficking in WMD, delivery systems and related materials in the Black Sea. However, this risk cannot be ruled out, given the lucrative nature of such activity.

As it is the case in any other region, there is also a connection between international terrorism and transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering and illegal arms-trafficking in the Black Sea region. The Black Sea is not immune from possible illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials.

### **c. Environmental Risks:**

No major catastrophic environmental incident occurred in the Black Sea originating from asymmetric causes. Some past incidents appear to have been caused by adverse environmental conditions and/or human error. On the other hand, some cases involving dumping or discharge of industrial waste have been reported in the Black Sea.

## **13. Suspect Vessels in the Black Sea:**

Since vessels prefer the shortest and safest routes to their destinations—generally defined as sea lines of communication—a vessel crossing the Black Sea through an unusual path or wandering in areas outside usual navigation routes might rationally be temporarily considered as a suspect vessel. Such vessels may possibly be involved in activities creating maritime risks, and deserve closer observation and monitoring. Likewise, vessels identified by credible intelligence as involved in illegal activities, but have no such records in the past, may be classified as temporarily suspect vessels.

Any vessel, formerly designated as temporarily suspect, with continuous record of being involved in illegal activities creating maritime risks may be classified as a "suspect vessel."

## **14. Overall Assessment:**

The strategic location of the Black Sea at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East and as an important transit route makes it vulnerable to asymmetric risks. Instability in the Black Sea region would have widespread implications for the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. While there is no security void in the Black Sea maritime areas, asymmetric risks, organized crime and environmental risks are the main security challenges which might be encountered.

It is evident that the maritime areas are not fully immune to risks of different nature that may originate from potential

sources of instability in and around the Black Sea region. Terrorism, trafficking in human beings and drugs, illicit transfers in SALW and possible proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery and related materials require the littoral States to remain vigilant against the probability of the spillover effects of such risks into the maritime areas. In other words, the principal challenge in this respect would arise from the possibility of the Black Sea maritime areas being turned into a transit route for sinister purposes. In this regard, suspect vessels pose a major challenge, and the potential of their use for illegal purposes makes continuous surveillance of selected maritime areas as well as trailing of such vessels necessary. This requires, inter-alia, combined efforts by the six littoral states in this vein to create synergy. BLACKSEAFOR is an instrument available to be used effectively for countering the risks, threats and challenges in the Black Sea.

END TEXT  
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